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ABSTRACT

Summarized is a therapy approach utilizing characterizations designed to help the client reduce his neurotic behaviors and develop his true potentials. Growing up, he may have been forced to reject aspects of his personality to meet others' expectations. Thus, he is not integrated or whole. To reduce the control used to hide his rejected parts of himself and others, and discover and integrate them, identities are formulated which personify these parts. The client is coached to experience himself as these people. Subsequently, he discovers that there is no further need to hide these aspects of himself. (Author)

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Use of Identities in Behavioral Change and Development

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The timid man, terrified of taking a chance; the social miser, hoarding all of himself, fearful of being hurt; Momma's little girl, saccarine, going out of her way to please, dreading offending anyone: all these characteristics can be symptoms of half-formed or non-integrated personalities. Chained within them are undeveloped missing "persons" -- the aggressive man, the giving person, or the exciting woman. I propose a method of therapy, whereby, the client assumes the identity of his "missing person," a characture of expressions of the self that he has been forced to reject. Thus, he might experience how he locks himself into his neurotic behavior pattern and, subsequently, learn how to break its grip and, thus, more fully discover and develop his human potentials.

Theory

The occurrence of chronic neurotic behaviors and undeveloped potentials in an individual can be hypothesized as the person not being integrated or whole (Janov, 1970; and Perls, 1969). He has learned to separate from himself certain of his undesirable aspects, his "unmentionables" (e.g.s., aggressiveness, laziness, sensitivity). These got him repeatedly hurt at one time (usually childhood) or were simply not developed due to deprivations in his environment. Associated with these are unfulfilled needs such as parental love never received or anger left unexpressed. From his efforts to keep his unmentionables hidden from himself and others, he experiences and expresses a limited and unreal vision of himself.

The individual insures that his unmentionables remain hidden from himself and others by means of physical-cognitive controls he has developed. Glandular, neural, and muscular systems interact to produce tensions which act to block awareness and expression of threatening feelings and actions (Janov, 1970; and Lowen, 1967). Tensions are manifested in such forms as a

rigid pelvis, a tight jaw, or migraine headaches. Emotionally, the control resists attempts to try alternative behaviors or experience oneself in new ways with various ploys, embarrassment, boredom, anger, sleepiness -- "I'd feel foolish doing that." These resistance feelings also serve to block out or distort unacceptable sensory data ("They don't really like me. They feel sorry for me."). Cognitively, learning is oriented to confirm the control is repeated assertions that the neurosis is the real and permanent self. "I am unattractive to women." It becomes axiomatic and irrefutable. Moreover, within the control, the person selectively picks those values and social norms that support his position. "No one likes a loud mouth."

A person's view of his acceptable parts, unmentionables, and control are often personified -- e.g.s., "my industrious-self, my weak-self, my judge (conscience)." Thus, the use of identities to interpret and work with one's behavior seems valid. Indeed, one's personality development is influenced by the behavioral models others present. The child mimics the actions of others and grows into these traits.

Therapy Method

By assuming the role of the character he has been forced to hide and compensate for, the therapy method presented encourages the client to express and integrate his unmentionables. He is given a second chance to grow up. At first, this contrary mode of acting intensifies his defensive control. Breaking through these resistances and paralyses is the key to change in the client. Once the control has been reduced, his compensations diminish and his true identity, whole and complete emerges.

The therapy itself consists in first determining the identity that will best suit the client's needs. These characters run the gamut from aggressive, powerful, demanding Ghenghis Khan and Tyrana to the soft, innocent, oper

Ingenue, from the massive, giving, creative Cornucopia to the sly, sharp, competitive Fox. Often it helps to have the client work with the fantasy which is most opposite his usual self. Step by step, the therapist coaches him through the circumstances and behaviors of the character portrayed. As he becomes familiar with the role, the client is encouraged to embellish and practice with it privately.

Frequently, the client has little success experimenting alone with his new identity. Embarrassed and frustrated, he encounters barriers set up by his control. At this point, a new set of models are introduced for the client to assume. His inhibitions are represented by the Judge, critical persecuting and often quite pompous. Opposing the Judge is the Accused who, like his neurotic behavior, cowers before the Judge's condemnations.

In a brutally honest confrontation between the two, the Judge reveals his methods of "protecting" the Accused from himself. Likewise, the Accused exposes his actions and his fears, and tells of petty triumphs in which he has frustrated the Judge's intentions. What emerges from the dialogue tends to represent long-forgotten childhood memories where the variety of manipulations used to mislead and threaten originated. Realizing how hollow and artificial his neurosis is, the Accused gets angry. He rebels. He feels unjustly treated. There is little reason for keeping his relationship with the Judge. With a new confidence, a new strength, a fortified will, he now risks change and development. With his resistances reduced, the client can re-encounter his unmentionable identity.

Case of Linda

Linda sought professional aid in an effort to save her three-year old marriage to Marc. Initially, Linda felt quite empty, depressed, and fearful. She expressed helplessness and hopelessness in not being able to please Marc

and make the marriage go. Despite her hard work to be "everything he wanted in a wife," Marc had become increasingly distant. She still felt love for him; yet, his indifference and her frustration were quickly reducing their relationship to a state of covert guerilla warfare: sniping remarks, Linda's tears, Marc's anger, followed by long silent periods.

The therapist's experience of Linda during the second session was that of the "good little girl" trying to please and get appreciation; like the good wife, she was the "good" client. Her manner was one of trying very hard to do what she thought was expected. Her actions were insipid and boring; only part of her was being exposed. Her movements were rather stiff, especially in pelvic and shoulder areas. She revealed that she had not been particularly excited or fulfilled with sex.

What was missing in Linda and being compensated for? Without aggressiveness, sensuality, excitement, and power, the compensation was the dutiful compliant good little girl. Working with an identity seemed to be an appropriate vehicle for helping Linda. In this case, she would be the opposite of the good girl, the powerful demanding woman, Tyrana.

The identity of Tyrana was described to Linda, and as homework before the third session, she was to discover her Tyrana, emersing herself in the experience. Alone, she was to dress and make up as the unconquerable empress would and then luxuriate in any fantasy, no matter how devilish, strange, or impractical. She should feel and express her new power and freedom. Speaking, moving, demanding, she should become the omnipotent Tyrana.

At the third session, Linda reported failure at trying to be Tyrana. Although she was alone, she felt embarrassed and foolish. Also, after she had made up and dressed provocatively, she became fearful seeing herself in the

mirror. During the session, she again tried to express her Tyrana, but encountered much stiffness and embarrassment.

At this point, the identities of the Judge and the Accused were introduced to Linda. She was asked to have an honest and candid dialogue between these people. She must in turn be each person when expressing herself to the other. As the dialogue proceeded, she was encouraged to muster up her fortitude to confront the Judge. Initially, the Judge was dominant towards the Accused ("You can't make it without me."). In response, the Accused felt weak and ashamed. As the dialogue progressed, the Judge was prodded by the therapist to share how she controls the Accused: "I make you feel awkward and stupid. I convince you that no one will like you unless you do things to please them." Hearing and experiencing the methods used by the Judge, the Accused became resentful: "You bitch: You don't want me to be happy." However, further prodded by the therapist, the Accused confessed how she subtly sabotaged things by doing what is expected, but in a "turned off" manner: "I follow your rules right to the letter to show you how your way doesn't work." The power continued to shift from the Judge to the Accused: "I can't do any worse without you." The Judge: "If you really let your feelings out, like this stupid Tyrana thing, you're going to hurt yourself and others; sex is trouble anyway." The Accused: "The hell with you! I have nothing to lose. Marc has practically left me."

After exposing her control, Linda was able to discover and express her Tyrana working over the next four weeks at home and in her sessions. Her embarrassed and inadequate feelings would occasionally emerge. However, aware of how they stifled her, progressively they had less impact upon her and were

of shorter duration. Aggressiveness and excitement increased. Linda experienced some significant changes. She made some sexual demands on Marc, but more importantly, this led her to live a freer and more independent life. "I wantonly teased Marc without worry about pleasing him. I wanted satisfaction. It was delicious. I felt fulfilled." But also, she no longer was desperate about the success of the marriage. "I am less dependent upon him. If it makes sense to separate, I'll be O K."

Conclusions

A particularly important payoff in using identities is that the client experiences himself in new ways. Actual experience tends to create more substantial and lasting change than reasoning and insight alone. The change involves the whole being, not just his cognitive outlook. Identities can tap what is uniquely the person, his richness and excitement; rather than merely seeking adjustment by being more rational or able to live better with social norms. The client develops additional behavioral alternatives to satisfy his needs. He can draw upon new resources within him previously rejected and undeveloped. He is whole, complete, and, thus, better able to enjoy his world. Professionally, the use of identities provide a mutually shared working framework for the therapist and client. The client is given a tangible medium which he can work with the therapist and on his own. He is encouraged to assume responsibility for his own development. Similarly, he gains skills helpful to continue his development after completing his therapy sessions. The therapist is left freer than otherwise to utilize his skills as a facilitator and reactor, rather than a savior.

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